

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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R 182005Z FEB 77  
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9913  
INFO AMCONSUL BORDEAUX  
AMCONSUL LYON  
AMCONSUL MARSEILLE  
AMCONSUL MARTINIQUE  
AMCONSUL NICE  
AMCONSUL STRASBOURG

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 PARIS 05147

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PINT, FR  
SUBJECT: MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

REF: 76 PARIS 37795

1. SUMMARY: THE LONG MANEUVER PERIOD FOR LISTS  
IN THE FORTHCOMING MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS IS DRAWING TO A  
CLOSE, WITH A MANDATORY CUT-OFF DATE FOR SUBMISSIONS OF  
MARCH 5. AT THIS POINT MOST EVERYONE HAS AGREED THAT  
THE ELECTIONS WILL PROVE TO BE A NATIONAL TEST OF CUR-  
RENT PARTY STRENGTHS AS WELL AS A MORE OR LESS ACCURATE  
PRECURSOR OF THE 1978 LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS. WHEN CON-  
SIDERING THE NATIONAL CONSEQUENCES OF THIS MARCH'S  
ELECTIONS, HOWEVER, IT IS ESSENTIAL TO RECALL  
THAT IN ALL BUT AN ESTIMATED 1,400 OF THE 36,400 COMMU-  
NES VOTING, THE CONTEST WILL BE PERSONAL RATHER THAN AN  
INTER-PARTY DEBATE; AND ONLY IN THE 221 CITIES WITH A  
POPULATION OVER 30,000 HAS THE COMPETITION BOILED DOWN,  
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FOR THE MOST PART, TO A STRUGGLE BETWEEN THE MAJORITY  
AND THE UNITED LEFT OPPOSITION (NOTE: THE LATTER GROUP  
OF 221 CITIES COMPRISES 42 PERCENT OF THE TOTAL POPULA-  
TION; HENCE THE ARGUMENT THAT THESE ELECTIONS DO CONS-  
TITUTE A NATIONAL TEST).

2. FURTHERMORE, DESPITE THE ATTENTION GIVEN TO INTRA-

COALITION STRIFE IN PARIS AND A FEW OTHER CITIES, BOTH MAJORITY AND OPPOSITION HAVE REACHED ACCORD ON THEIR RESPECTIVE LISTS IN MOST CASES. MOST CITIES AND TOWNS WILL NOT CHANGE POLITICAL COLOR; MOST CAMPAIGNS WILL GET LITTLE ATTENTION OUTSIDE THEIR LOCAL BASE, AND FEW IMPORTANT POLITICAL CAREERS WILL BE MADE OR BROKEN ON THE BASIS OF THIS ELECTION. IT IS MORE OR LESS SAFE, HOWEVER, TO MAKE THE FOLLOWING PREDICTIONS:

A) THE EXPECTED WINNER WILL BE THE PS, WITH THE PCF SLIDING INTO MANY TOWN HALLS FOR THE FIRST TIME ON THEIR COAT TAILS. THE LEFT STANDS A BETTER THAN EVEN CHANCE OF CAPTURING FROM THE MAJORITY TOULOUSE, RENNES, REIMS, PERIGUEUX, POITIERS, BELFORT, TROYES, NARBONNE, LE MANS, DIJON, LE CREUSOT, AUXERRE AND MONTPELLIER.

B) THE BIG LOSERS WILL BE THE RPR AND THE INDEPENDENT REPUBLICANS. THE ONLY MAJOR CITIES THE MAJORITY HAS HOPES OF RECAPTURING FROM THE LEFT ARE GRENOBLE AND LILLE, BUT EVEN HERE MAJORITY CHANCES ARE SLIM.

C) GOF MINISTERS AND STATE SECRETARIES WHO RUN AND LOSE WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY STEP DOWN FROM THE CABINET. THUS A MINISTERIAL SHAKEUP WILL FOLLOW THE ELECTIONS UNLESS ALL MINISTERS RUNNING WIN, WHICH IS UNLIKELY. MOST THREATENED ARE BROUSSE, SEGARD, GIRAUD, SOISSON AND D'ORNANO HIMSELF (SEPTTEL).

D) THE TWO MOST IMPORTANT MARGINAL POLITICAL ENTITIES THAT WILL MAKE THEIR STRENGTH FELT IN THE ELECTIONS ARE THE GROUPE D'ACTION MUNICIPALE (GAM) AND THE ECOLOGISTS. THE LATTER COULD GET UP TO 10 PERCENT IN SOME CITIES, THROWING THE ELECTION INTO A RUN-OFF. EX-CONFIDENTIAL

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TREMIST FRINGE GROUPS WILL FARE POORLY.

E) ALL THE PARTIES WILL REEVALUATE THEIR STRATEGY FOR 1978 ON THE BASIS OF HOW THEY FARE IN THIS ELECTION. THE CENTRISTS COULD BE INSPIRED TO ONE MORE ATTEMPT AT CONSOLIDATION IF THEY COME OUT TOO POORLY. THE LEFT COALITION WILL BE REINFORCED IN ITS DETERMINATION TO REMAIN UNITED. THE RPR, IF IT FARES WORSE THAN EXPECTED, COULD BECOME EVEN MORE STRIDENTLY ANTI-GISCARDIAN IN A LAST DITCH EFFORT TO STOP THE HEMORRAGE. END SUMMARY.

3. THE GAULLISTS: IN RECENT WEEKS RPR PRESIDENT JACQUES CHIRAC HAS JUMPED ABOUT FRANCE COMING TO THE ASSISTANCE OF PARTY CANDIDATES IN NEED OF HELP. IN HIS SPEECHES HE HAS LASHED OUT VIGOROUSLY AT BOTH THE "SOCIALO-COMMUNIST COLLECTIVISTS" AND WEAKNESS AT THE TOP IN GOF, THUS POTENTIALLY ALIENATING HIMSELF FROM AN ESTIMATED 80/85 PERCENT OF THE FRENCH ELECTORATE. (THE IR AND CENTRISTS GENERALLY SUPPORT GOF POLI-

CY). ON THE OTHER HAND THE RPR IS BETTER IMPLANTED

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LOCALLY THAN ITS MAJORITY PARTNERS AND MAY THUS BE ABLE TO MINIMIZE ITS INEVITABLE LOSSES. THE CAUSE CELEBRE OF COURSE IS PARIS, A GAULLIST FIEFDOM SINCE THE INCEPTION OF THE FIFTH REPUBLIC IN 1958. HAVING LOST BOTH THE ELYSEE AND MATIGNON, IT CONSTITUTES THE RPR'S LAST PRESTIGE BASE (WHICH EXPLAINS CHIRAC'S CANDIDACY). SHOULD THE PARTY LOSE TOO HEAVILY, CHIRAC WILL LAY BLAME SQUARELY AT VGE'S DOOR.

4. THE INDEPENDENT REPUBLICANS: RECENT IR ATTEMPTS TO BROADEN ITS NATIONAL BASE HAVE BEEN GENERALLY UNSUCCESSFUL. ON THE OTHER HAND THE PARTY MAY STAND TO BENEFIT SLIGHTLY FROM THE SOMEWHAT BETTERED IMAGE OF THE PRESIDENT (UP FOUR POINTS IN THE LAST MONTH), WITH WHOM THE PARTY IS SO CLOSELY ASSOCIATED. ON SINGLE LISTS THE PROPORTION OF IR TO RPR CANDIDATES WILL NOT BE SIGNIFICANTLY ALTERED FROM WHAT IT WAS IN THE 1971 MUNICIPAL  
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ELECTIONS, DESPITE THE FACT THAT THE UDR HAS DROPPED IN THE POLLS FROM 36 PERCENT OF THE NATIONAL ELECTORATE IN 1973 TO AN ESTIMATED 18 PERCENT TODAY. THERE HAS BEEN CLOSE COLLABORATION ON CAMPAIGN STRATEGY BETWEEN THE CENTRISTS AND THE IR, AND THIS ALLIANCE COULD HAVE AN EFFECT OF FURTHER ALIENATING THE RPR NO MATTER WHAT THE OUTCOME OF THE ELECTION.

5. THE CENTER: WITH 10 PERCENT OF LARGE CITY MAYORAL-TIES CURRENTLY OCCUPIED BY CDS MEMBERS, THE PARTY'S STAKE IN THE ELECTION IS NOT MINIMAL. THE CDS CONTI-NUES TO PUSH FOR UNITED MAJORITY LISTS AND HAS EXTENDED AN APPEAL TO NON-MAJORITY CANDIDATES TO AHDERE TO MAJOR-ITY LISTS. LACKING ANY STRONG OR CENTRALIZED PARTY CONTROL, HOWEVER, ELECTORAL STRATEGY IS FOR THE MOST PART BEING DETERMINED AT THE LOCAL FEDERATION LEVEL. FOR THE RADICAL SOCIALISTS (RS), INTERNAL PARTY DIVISI-ONS, SO EVIDENT IN THE PARIS MAYORALTY RACE, WILL OVER-SHADOW THE FINAL ELECTORAL RESULTS. RS PARTY MEMBERS, CONCERNED WITH PROBLEMS OF PARTY IDENTITY AND INDIVIDUA-LITY, ARE RELUCTANT TO BED DOWN WITH THEIR MAJORITY ALLIES. WHATEVER THE EVENTUAL OUTCOME, THE SCHISMATIC AND CENTRIPETAL TENDENCIES EVOKED BY THE ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN WILL HAVE TO BE DEALT WITH AT THE RS PARTY CON-GRESS NOW SCHEDULED FOR LATE SPRING.

6. THE PHONY DISCORD THEORY: IN THESE MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS, PCF LEADER MARCHAIS CLAIMS THAT CHIRAC AND GISCARD ARE TWO SIDES OF THE SAME COIN AND, BY APPEARING TO GIVE A CHOICE WITHIN THE MAJORITY TO ELECTORS, THEY WILL BETTER THE MAJORITY'S CHANCES AS A WHOLE. PS LEADER MITTERRAND SEEMINGLY TAKES THE STRIFE FOR REAL AND DECLARES IT WILL WORK TO THE BENEFIT OF THE LEFT AS A WHOLE (AND TO THE PS IN PARTICULAR, SINCE A FORMER MAJORITY VOTER RARELY JUMPS STRAIGHT INTO THE COLD BATH OF THE PCF). MARCHAIS IS CORRECT IN THAT THE DIVERGENCE

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BETWEEN THE GAULLISTS AND GISCARDIANS IS MORE A QUESTION OF PERSONALITY AND STYLE THAN OF SUBSTANCE. ON THE OTHER HAND MITTERRAND IS CORRECT INsofar AS THE "BATTLE OF PARIS" HAS LEFT A BAD IMPRESSION IN THE MINDS OF MUCH OF THE MAJORITY'S ELECTORATE IN GREATER PARIS, WHICH COMPRISES 12 AND-A-HALF MILLION OUT OF FRANCE'S 53 MILLION POPULATION. WHATEVER THE CASE, SOME OBSER-VERS BELIEVE THAT SO MUCH MOMENTUM OF MISTRUST AND DIS-

CORD HAS BEEN GENERATED WITHIN THE MAJORITY THAT NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS IN THE MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS, FENCE-MENDING WILL PROVE DIFFICULT AND IN SOME CASES IMPOSSIBLE. THE DENOUEMENT WILL COME INSIDE THE NEWLY-ELECTED PARIS MUNICIPAL COUNCIL AS IT MEETS TO SELECT A MAYOR.

7. THE LEFT: ON THE LEFT, WHILE BOTH SOCIALISTS AND COMMUNISTS AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL CONTINUE TO FOCUS MORE ATTENTION ON THE COMPOSITION OF MUNICIPAL LISTS, THE 1978 LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS ARE A CONCERN BEHIND EVERY MOVE. THE TWO TESTS ARE SO INEXTRICABLY LINKED THAT NO ACTION CAN BE CONSIDERED COMPLETELY WITHIN THE DOMAIN OF ONE OR THE OTHER. BOTH THE PS AND PCF ARE TRYING TO STAKE OUT POSITIONS NOW, UNDER THE GUISE OF MUNICIPAL MANEUVERING, WHICH WILL STAND THEM IN GOOD STEAD WITH THE ELECTORATE AS A WHOLE IN 1978 AND IN THEIR INTERNAL UNION OF THE LEFT CONFRONTATIONS BEFORE THAT TIME.

8. THE CONCERN FOR LONGER-TERM IMAGE MAKING HAS EMERGED DURING THE PAST WEEK, FOR EXAMPLE, IN THE SUDDENLY PUBLIC DEBATE, BOTH WITHIN THE PS AND BETWEEN THE PS AND PCF, ON THE SENSITIVE AND IMPORTANT ISSUE OF INDEM-

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NIZATION FOR NATIONALIZED HOLDINGS. FOR THE PS, THIS DEBATE IS MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE A FURTHER MOVE (AFTER THE PATRONAT COLLOQUIUM OF FALL 1976) TO DEMONSTRATE THE RESPONSIBLE NATURE OF THEIR ECONOMIC PLANNING AND THUS REASSURE THAT PORTION OF THEIR ELECTORATE WHICH REMAINS SKEPTICAL OF COMMON PROGRAM NATIONALIZATION SCHEMES. IT IS A DEBATE, HOWEVER, WHICH DOES NOT DIRECTLY TOUCH ON ISSUES RELEVANT TO MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS. IN ANOTHER EXAMPLE CLOSE TO HOME, MITTERRAND HAS MADE NOTICEABLE EFFORTS TO PROJECT A STATESMANLIKE IMAGE, REPLYING IN VERY MODERATE TONES TO SOME OF GISCARD'S MORE PROVOCATIVE STATEMENTS AT PLOERMEL (PARIS 4134).

9. THE STAKES: THERE REMAIN IMPORTANT STAKES FOR BOTH SIDES IN THE MUNICIPALS. THE PS  
-- WANTS TO SHOW A FURTHER MANIFESTATION OF AN  
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EVER-INCREASING ELECTORAL BASE WHICH WILL HOPEFULLY CREST AT THE LEGISLATIVES;

-- WHILE DEMONSTRATING THE EFFICACY OF ITS UNION OF THE LEFT STRATEGY, THUS PROVING FURTHER THAT THE COMMON PROGRAM IS A WORKABLE BASIS FOR A NATIONAL GOVERNING COALITION;

-- BUT MUST SIMULTANEOUSLY DISTANCE ITSELF FROM THE PCF AND EVEN STRIVE TO LIMIT PCF GAINS, BOTH FOR SHORT-TERM ELECTORAL ADVANTAGE IN SELECTED AREAS AND FOR THE ENHANCEMENT OF ITS OWN IDENTITY.  
THE PCF

-- HAS PERHAPS A GREATER STAKE IN THE UNION OF THE LEFT STRATEGY IN THAT ANY POTENTIAL DIMINUTION IN ITS ELECTORAL STRENGTH WOULD BE PARTIALLY MASKED BY COMMON LISTS;

-- MUST ALSO STRIVE TO FURTHER DEMONSTRATE THE EFFICACY OF THE COMMON PROGRAM, ITS ONLY ROUTE TO POWER;

-- AND MUST MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO PROTECT ITS EXISTING POWER BASE WITH AN EYE TOWARDS FUTURE PS-PCF NEGOTIATIONS OVER ISSUES IN DISPUTE.

10. CONSEQUENTLY, BOTH SIDES HAVE BEEN MOTIVATED TO FORM "LISTES D'UNION" (AND HAVE SUCCEEDED IN OVER 165 OF THE 221 CITIES WITH POPULATIONS OF MORE THAN 30,000) WHILE SIMULTANEOUSLY TRYING TO MAXIMIZE THE SIZE OF THEIR INDIVIDUAL POWER BASES. THIS LATTER REQUIREMENT MAY BE THE EXPLANATION FOR INTERNECINE STRUGGLES SUCH

AS VILLEURBANNE WHERE BOTH SIDES ARE STICKING TO THEIR GUNS OVER THE ISSUE OF HEADING THE LIST. FOR THE PS, A VICTORY FOR NATIONAL SECRETARY CHARLES HERNU, OVER PCF OPPOSITION AND IN A FORMER PCF STRONGHOLD, WOULD HAVE PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS BEYOND THE POLITICAL IMPORTANCE OF GAINING ANOTHER TOWN HALL. THE PCF HAS CONCENTRATED ITS EFFORTS ON THOSE NEGOTIATIONS WHERE THE PS IS REPRESENTED BY ITS CERES LEFT WING, HOPING  
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TO PRESSURE THE ACKNOWLEDGED CERES DEDICATION TO A STRENGTHENED UNION OF THE LEFT. THE RESOLUTION OF THE PARIS DEADLOCK (CERES PS FEDERATION) WAS NOTICEABLE FOR SLIGHT MRG GAINS AND FOR PS RETREAT OVER HEADING THE LIST IN TWO "SURE" SECTORS. MARSEILLE (SEPTTEL) IS, OF COURSE, ANOTHER GLARING EXAMPLE OF AN EXCEPTION FOR PURELY LOCAL REASONS TO THE NATIONAL AGREEMENT SIGNED LAST JUNE FOR JOINT LISTS. REGARDLESS OF INTERNAL DIFFICULTIES, THE UNION OF THE LEFT HOPES TO OBTAIN UNITED LISTS IN SOME 200 CITIES OVER 30,000 BY THE END

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OF FEBRUARY.

11. CONCLUSIONS: SINCE EVERYONE EXPECTS THE MAJORITY TO LOSE FAIRLY HEAVILY IN THESE ELECTIONS, THE QUESTION NOW IS WHO WILL FARE PROPORTIONATELY WORSE THAN THE OTHER -- THE GISCARDIANS (IR AND CENTRISTS) OR THE RPR. WITH SINGLE MAJORITY LISTS IN 600 OUT OF 620 TOWNS WITH A POPULATION OVER 9,000 -- AND SINCE IT WAS KNOWN LONG IN ADVANCE THAT A CERTAIN NUMBER OF COMPETING LISTS WERE A FOREGONE CONCLUSION -- ATTENTION INEVITABLY FOCUSES ON THE NATION'S CAPITAL. THE VICTORY OF A GISCARDIAN CANDIDATE, D'ORNANO OR ANOTHER COMPROMISE CANDIDATE, COULD GO A LONG WAY TO OFFSETTING DAMAGE DONE ELSEWHERE TO INDEPENDENT REPUBLICANS AND CENTRISTS. ON THE OTHER HAND A VICTORY FOR JACQUES CHIRAC IN PARIS WOULD OFFSET TO A CERTAIN EXTENT RPR LOSSES ELSEWHERE AND COULD PROVE A NATIONAL SETBACK TO GISCARD'S IMAGE, CONFIDENTIAL

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EVEN IF GISCARDIAN CANDIDATES COME OUT LESS POORLY THAN THEIR GAULLIST COUNTERPARTS NATIONWIDE. FOR THE LEFT, ELECTORAL GAINS ON THE SCALE ENVISAGED BY MOST OBSERVERS WILL BE A REFLECTION OF THE SUCCESS OF EXTENSIVE GRASS ROOTS ORGANIZING EFFORTS BY PS FEDERATIONS OVER THE LAST FOUR YEARS AND WOULD CLEARLY DEMONSTRATE THE VIABILITY OF UNITED LEFT ELECTORAL STRATEGY. RUSH

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